

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

I support the CSCU leadership's request for a total of \$268,006,801 in increased state support- an increase of \$174,889,801 over the governor's proposal.

I would like to express, though, the need to go beyond this request to also contribute the amount that CSCU intends to generate by increasing tuition at the colleges and universities. The intended increase is 5% which represents just a couple hundred dollars a year for our students- but \$224 for many of our students is significant. The proposal to increase tuition has a particular sting given that the primary means of saving money over the last few years has been through natural attrition at the community colleges—positions vacated were left unfilled. What we are asking these students to do, therefore, is pay more for reduced services.

We are asking them to do this while costs of living are skyrocketing and while our state, one of the wealthiest in the country, is flush with cash. Though it is tempting to get our hands on any Federal money we can, cutting into the Pell funding of some of our neediest students, or the pockets of those who are making ends meet and trying to make a better life for themselves, at this moment in particular, is unacceptable. Research shows that for the country's poorest students it is the opportunity costs of college attendance that are the largest obstacle. Every dollar we take from our student is one dollar less that they have to be able to eat, pay rent, afford the commute/internet connection, and go to school all at the same time. The amount raised through tuition is minute in the larger scheme of things and, while CSCU leadership may have the burden of demonstrating that they are pursuing other ways of raising cash other than state money, I have no such burden.

I also want to posit that we have demonstrated, this year and others, a need for significantly increased funding into the future. State funding for CSCU has been relatively flat (in dollar amount) for the past decade. The share of the cost of public higher education borne by the state is significantly less than where we were in the late 80s. The cost to students has increased significantly since the 60s when a student could pay for a year at one of our universities by working just 100 hours at minimum wage over the summer. These days, they'd have to work over 1000 hours to pay for a year at that same university.

It is better to think of the shortfall in our CSCU budget not as a failure of the system but as a measure of the extent to which state funding of our public higher education system falls short. One can make many criticisms of the way the CSCU leadership has handled our situation- and I have criticized plenty- but all in all, even if I critique the hurried hiring of 174 advisors funded by HEERF money with no plan of how to pay them when it runs out, their salaries represent only \$25M per year. I have criticized the increase in levels of administration over the last couple of years through, again, a glut of hiring in Spring 2020 for administrators for a college that doesn't yet exist that has created a strain that appears will be addressed through layoffs of members of my union—but even still, we're talking about less than \$15M per year when we talk about those salaries.

The system needs something in the vicinity of \$300M more to survive right now. The reasons provided to your committee by CSCU system leadership are SEBAC negotiated salary increases and the pandemic's effect on enrolment. But the salaries of workers are not, and should not be, an unexpected

cost. And the system has already received \$350M (about 60% of it available for institutional use) in COVID funding through HEERF and ARPA combined. Digging the system out of a hole is not a unique event for this committee. It is clear that we cannot survive as funded and efforts to shrink our spending have unintended undermining effects on our ability to attract and keep students.

The consolidation, which was advertised as an effort to reduce costs, has cost much more than was ever projected already and has no realistic plan to save in the future. Centralization and efficiency are not synonymous. The consolidation centralizes the system, but we fail to see opportunities to maintain the same level of service at significantly less cost. The contraction in the workforce is largely performative- we will shed experienced workers and infrastructure for now and then will find that we either have to replace them all for a more expensive system with a bloated administration, or we will settle for a corporate-style, centralized shadow of what used to be colleges.

It is important that we invest in these institutions for the future of the state- the benefits of state funded higher education are not limited to those who attend. It is also an opportunity, given the diversity of our CSCU student body to address the racial and class disparities in opportunity with which we struggle in this state. At the Community Colleges, for example, 51% of our student body identifies as non-white and a majority of our students qualify for Pell funding. Whether through the passive failure to preserve the levels of state support enjoyed in past decades or the active attempt at contraction that is the consolidation, we can do better. We should be particularly interested in keeping these institutions whole and healthy and providing a level of service of which we can be proud.